



## **Kaleo Maclay – A Winning Mindset**

**Andy Stevenson:** Ok Kaleo, I hope I pronounce that correctly. It's a wonderful name and Hawaiian in origin. Is that right?

**Kaleo Maclay:** Yes.

**AS:** And do any of your names mean anything?

**KM:** My full name is Kaleo Kanahale Maclay, and it means 'The voice of the Heavens'

**AS:** Wow! I bet you feel the pressure on you to carry that around with you for your whole life. It's nice to be say to we've had the voice of the heavens on the podcast series so that's good. It's becoming a bit of a theme to talk about baking on this podcast, because we had Sit Ski Winter Paralympian Arly Velazquez on a couple of weeks ago talking about the bakery empire that he started in Mexico City of all places. And now you, who run your own cookie business.

**KM:** Yes, so it's Cookies By Kaleo with my husband and our business partner. And I just opened Flour and Flower. So that's more of a shop front. But I started Cookies by Kaleo just because I wanted something creative to do. I was a little sad that the Games are over. We just won the gold medal which was the most awesome time in my life and all of a sudden, nothing. So I wanted to find something to invest myself in and it got started there.

**AS:** So it's a small business isn't it? Presumably do you employ people to keep the business going and the cookies being made or is it just yourself?

**KM:** So Cookies by Kaleo is just me but at Flour and Flower shop, we have about eight employees.

**AS:** Ok and then cookies ways, are we talking the... now I'm just trying to get this the right way round because cookies to an American would mean the sort of bigger flatter cookies, whereas to a British person or are a European person, they might be too small around the one that way round. I'm just trying to think.

**KM:** So I watch the Great British baking show, so I might know what you're referencing. But I make sugar cookies, so they're sort of the larger, I make the decorated sugar cookies, and then they have royal icing on top of them.

**AS:** You're making me hungry. What are your own personal favourite varieties of flavours?

**KM:** I love a traditional sugar cookie, but I also love a chocolate chip. At Flour and Flower I make chocolate chunk cookie with Hawaiian sea salt. And it's so good, I wish I could

give you one to try.

**AS: So you have got a couple of businesses On-The-Go, you're a Paralympian, a Mother , and we will talk about all of that and will certainly talk about your Paralympic moments, but first of all let's go back to the start. Can you tell us a little bit about your disability?**

**KM:** So I was born with club foot. It runs in my family and some of my cousins have it as well. my main limitation are jumping, flexion. My foot doesn't move left or right. I have a little bit of movement up and down on my left leg,

If you can picture a golf club, that's pretty much how my foot was formed. It was turned in and I was missing one of the bones that helps support and keep straight.

At eight months I had my surgery, it has a really long name which I can't pronounce. So I had my reconstructive surgery, but I'm limited with my mobility and I lack a calf muscle. I just changed classification but I'm classed as a minimal.

**AS: And can you remember the first time you felt that you were different because of your disability I guess in family circles as you say you had relatives who had the same condition, but perhaps more around your friends and at school? Can you remember when you first felt a little bit different to the others?**

**KM:** My mum really raised me not to necessarily know, so I didn't actually know that I was born with club foot or had any sort of a disability until I started doing sports around other kids athletically. I actually did ballet and in ballet they had a skip. Can I tell you that was the most frustrating thing I ever tried to do. Because I don't have the flexion or the mobility or the calf muscle, jumping off my left leg is non-existent. It was so frustrating that I couldn't do it like the other kids. Then my mum and I had conversations about it. I never wanted to live my life limiting myself and thinking of all the things I couldn't do. So I really did push myself and stayed in standing volleyball, I went to different trainers who taught me how to jump differently, I worked with coaches who could help me to do what I do but in a different

**AS: I know your mum instilled some real strong values into you. How much of an influence was she?**

**KM:** Oh my gosh, my mum is incredible. She was a volleyball and basketball player. She loves to be athletic and I'm so thankful for that woman. she'd drive through the night to somewhere like Minnesota at 8am, show up in a gym. All the sacrifices she made so I could do what I love and push myself, and get to the Paralympic level. It's just incredible. I loved pushing myself and seeing what I could do. There were times my disability would come up more than others. In basketball I couldn't do a right handed lay up because you jump off your left foot. One of the coaches used to yell at me but he didn't know I had club foot. My mum didn't tell him until after that because she didn't want me to be treated differently. There were different times in school where it would come up and in standing volleyball, it came up a lot because jumping is a big part. But I always wanted to be included as much as possible. I didn't tell anyone until it came up, especially coaches. Later it was more undeniable and I had more difficulty with coaches, but in the Paralympics it's been such a great place to be. I've even struggled with not feeling disabled enough, which is so funny and I have talked to my team about it. I am in this middle of ground of my disability coming up a lot in standing, but in disabled, not

enough.

**AS:** It's an interesting one because sitting volleyball is not in the Olympics, and it's interesting on not feeling disabled enough because in terms of your actual volleyball skills, if you were able to stand you'd be in the Olympics. I understand the feeling of seeing people in your team who are missing limbs or wheelchair users.

**KM:** Yeah and I kept it to myself in the team for a few years, because I started really young. But I started to communicate to my team how I felt and how classification made me feel within the team. But they are great people and my closest friends. They reassured me and said 'You deserve a place here. You have been through just as much as the rest of us' and they just said how thankful they are I'm on the team. I have a disability and that's undeniable.

**AS:** I watched a bit of the volleyball in 2012, which was quite a big deal in the UK. I didn't get to see much in Rio but there's always the brilliant moment when they bring out the trolley type thing and the players take off the prosthetic limbs and then it's wheeled off. I remember sitting round at 2012 with people who had not seen sitting volleyball before, and there was a slight moment of 'I don't know how to react to that!' It raised a few eyebrows.

**KM:** I grew up around sitting volleyball and prosthetics, but it's still funny when people aren't. One of my teammates was missing her arm and had a prosthetic. It was one of our jokes that she would take off her arm and I would hold it like I was holding her hand, it was very silly. But people would be so confused. We did it in a mall once and people were beside themselves. But I'm so used to being around prosthetics and everyone taking off their prosthetics.

**AS:** Before we move onto 2012, one more question about school days. One of the previous athletes we spoke to in this series is Tatyana McFadden, a US Paralympic legend. Part of her story is the campaign she and her mum fought for opportunities, in terms of allowing disabled school children to compete in sport. She told a story about not being able to compete in events, and they took it all the way to court and fought really hard. Did you ever experience discrimination and how much do you admire the work of Tatyana and her mum in that field?

**KM:** She's incredible and I'm very thankful that I haven't had one of those experiences. My mum and I fought a lot for me to be accepted in volleyball because of my limitations not being passed over for the A-teams in club volleyball. But, Tatyana is incredible and I'm so thankful for people who push for equality. One of our teammates, Katie Holloway, has pushed a lot for equality in our pay compared to the Olympics. I'm so thankful to people like her and Katie who have allowed us to be where we are. I'm so thankful.

**AS:** What was sweet about Rio 2016 four years later was that it was China again and you beat them. What was different about you how approached that match, why did win on that occasion?

**KM:** Our team had developed a lot. Going off of London, some of the players retired, which opened up a new avenue for newer players, and the teams in London and Rio were very different. We did a lot of work in the four years leading up to Rio on team dynamic

and playing cohesively as a team. We also did a lot of work on systems because we'd always play deep against China, but that wasn't our goal. Our goal was to be the best versions of ourselves.

**AS: You've come from a very supportive family as we've spoke about. Is being part of a team comparable to a family?**

**KM:** Absolutely. Even in the realm of arguing like a family, there are just so many things between a family and a team. They're very comparable and the level of within family, you are family and you have that to fall back on, it's the same with a team. We are a team, we have to do this together, they're very comparable.

**AS: If the sitting volleyball team is a family, what's your family role within that team?**

**KM:** It's very different on and off court. On the court I have to be a leader, off the court I am more of a supporter. I like to support my team in any way I can, I love to be there for my teammates.

**AS: Are you the social secretary?**

**KM:** Bethany is the social sec, I am more of the social hugger when allowed!

**AS: Let's hope we can look forward to getting back to that next year. Just one question on Rio - some sports people when they achieve their goals, they have a feeling afterwards of 'what do we do now?' Did you experience that or did you set yourself new goals?**

**KM:** I experience that a lot, actually. I've heard it be called the post Paralympic blues, and I can relate. It was a high working towards nothing but winning that gold medal for years. And it was a huge achievement when we accomplished that goal. Everything I've ever wanted. The drop off after the Paralympics is something I'd never experienced, which is what started Cookies by Kaleo.

My personality is an achiever and I like having a goal I am working towards, I'll always want more which is sometimes good and bad, but I'm really thankful for that piece of me because it has kept me moving. When I started Cookies by Kaleo, I always knew I wanted a shopfront, that was the next goal. It can cause me to not appreciate where I am. But although I'm working towards these future goals, I want to appreciate where I am because sometimes at the time, you can forget or look past, and you look so far in front of you that you forget the dream that I'm living in.

**AS: We're all probably a bit guilty of it. The world goes 100mph and we don't stop to look at our successes. We've been talking about family and in October 2017, you got a new perspective because you and your husband Matthew got the arrival of your baby son, Duke. Was juggling motherhood and sport and even business, something you thought about before Duke came along?**

**KM:** No! Two of the things I never thought about growing up were getting married and

having kids. It wasn't in the forefront of my mind like some of my friends. But it's funny that the first thing I did in my early twenties were getting married and having a baby. Even Duke, he surprised Matthew and I at such a perfect time. I had never thought about it before it had happened.

**AS: So Duke is just over three years old... has he got a volleyball to play with on the floor yet?**

**KM:** He has, and he can actually set! I think a lot of people would be slightly sceptical to hear that, but he can! My position is a setter, so a passer is the first contact. A setter is you receive the board over your head and you set it out for the hitter. You're kind of like the quarterback, so you are the person between the two plays.

**AS: You're pushing the ball up with two hands, aren't you? Setting it up?**

**KM:** Yes, exactly. And he can do it pretty well! It's so cute in the mornings when I leave for practice, he's like 'mummy go bolleyball?' and he calls it 'bolleyball'.

**AS: Did you ever consider that you may have to consider Duke over the other things you were involved in? That you'd have to give up sitting volleyball or your business goals?**

**KM:** It was always a thought in the back of my mind because my first priority is my family and for me, that has gotten clouded a lot. I had gotten so good at compartmentalising. My family is here in my brain on the right side and volleyball is on the left, business is in the middle. But in reality they all work together, so I wouldn't have to sacrifice one of them. I'm sacrificing more by not allowing them to be together. So in the last year I've done work on trying to make my life more cohesive and bring my family into volleyball, the businesses into both. I have always wanted to bring Duke and my family along because I do think I can do all three. I can be a mum, I can be a family person, a business owner and an athlete. I don't think I have to choose one over the other. But it is a lot of work to try and make them all work together.

**AS: This is something I hear quite a lot from sportspeople and it has to be said, primarily sportswomen, where these questions are asked but not to a sportsman. I did interview a Colombian Paralympic swimmer, Carlos Serrano, a few weeks ago and we did put some of these questions to him about fatherhood. How do you feel about that in balance?**

**KM:** It's more common for women to be asked those questions and to be asked to sacrifice more because even in sport, this last year, when the Games got postponed I pushed back having a baby another year because we want another. And for me, because I'm a woman in sport, it means our family has to wait another year. But for a male counterpart, he doesn't necessarily have to wait. He can continue with his family and it wouldn't keep them from sport.

**AS: Are there other mums on the volleyball team or the US Paralympic team in general who you can talk to about what you are trying to juggle?**

**KM:** Yeah, Laura. She has three kids and she has been a mum much longer than I have. There's no perfect answer for how to balance being gone from your kids birthday when you're on a trip, there's no way to do it correctly, but it is important that you have someone and I have Laura to share my experiences with, and she shares hers.

**AS: I read an interesting quote from you when you said 'I want to make sure this time as quality as I can whilst I'm away from my son, to make it worth it because it's hard to leave him.' Is there a sense that being away from Duke and Matthew might be extra motivation to your sitting volleyball career?**

**KM:** Absolutely. Last year we were living in Hawaii so I was travelling even longer away from my family. Away from Matthew, but I was still able to take Duke with me. But I was away for longer periods of time and more often. When we went to Peru, I was extremely determined because if I'm going to be away from my family, I want it to be worth something. I want to get the most out of it. I am sacrificing a lot to be away from my family.

**AS: Well you're obviously doing very well because we have a little surprise for you and a little clip for you to listen to...**

**Matthew Maclay:** Hey Kaleo. I just want to say I love you so much and I am incredibly thankful for the incredible mother that you are to Duke, the wonderful wife that you are to me. Like I was saying last night, I would never want to spend my life with anybody else but you. And I'm so thankful for all the adventures we've been through in the past four and a half years, plus of being married. I love you, I'm proud of you. You kick butt at everything you do and I will always be your number one fan. Love you.

**KM:** Ohhhh, you're making me cry! I didn't know that was a thing!

**AS: Well that's very nice, it's coming from the heart and as you can hear, he thinks you are doing brilliantly to juggle the things you do. I guess it's vital that he and the rest of your family are there to support you as well.**

**KM:** Yeah. Because we travel so much, Matthew has only gotten to see me play a handful of times but when we lived in Hawaii, he had a very upfront role in training with me. He was tossing all the balls, learning about all the different aspects of volleyball - more than he ever wanted to know.

**AS: And he's there on the fatherhood side too. It's important both parents play their role.**

**KM:** He has done it so well and honestly, I'm so thankful that I have him because I could not do volleyball without him. I have him as my partner and when I'm gone, Duke is with him. I couldn't do it without him.

**AS: I think I might know the answer to this question through hearing your personality and the type of person you are, but has your disability had any impact whatsoever on how you mother?**

**KM:** Absolutely. I think a lot of people can be determined by what they can or can't do, but you can put your mind to absolutely anything and accomplish it. It's helped me in parenting because you can accomplish. Right now, Duke wants to be a robot and I'm like, 'Dude, you can be a robot. Let's figure it out.' I think in time it will show more in doing it that way.

**AS: What about the moment where Duke notices there is something different and you have to sit down and explain?**

**KM:** I haven't had to yet, but I feel like because he has been in this Paralympic world his entire life, he has got a good realisation of the differences and how it makes us all so unique and beautiful. Bethany is missing a limb and I'm not, but even as a baby he would play on her leg and having that conversation will allow him more understanding of life experiences as well as different things people have to overcome in life. And his privilege of not having a disability. He can appreciate all the differences.

**AS: Is there a case that you might not even have to have a sit down conversation? When he gets to seven or eight, he'll have all the answers in front of him anyway?**

**KM:** Yeah I do think he has that experience. He's been within this environment for so long that it's almost normal for him to see prosthetics. You called it a trolley which I loved, we'd call it a cart!

**AS: You know what, I'm laughing because I was stumbling around for the word and of course, cart would be the best one.**

**KM:** You should stick with trolley. I like that, I might start calling it that. The limbs in the cart, it is normal and even me growing up, I joined this team at 12 and it became what I'm used to. It shocked me when people were treated as abnormal, walking through airports where people would stare too long, it would infuriate me. This is what I've grown up around and I don't feel different or something to be stared at. But being around it really helps understand it.

**AS: This is the power of the Paralympics. Broadcasting the Paralympics around the world and getting as many young people seeing it on their TV screens and computers, it's a huge purpose of the IPC to get disability far more visible around the world. Because all children will grow up with a similar experience to Duke, even if they don't have a disabled family member themselves.**

**KM:** Yeah, I remember being in an airport after Rio and they had a sculpture of a person with a disability. There was a curiosity of this little girl and she said 'Dad, what's that?' and he said 'Don't worry about it, just come here.' I just watched this interaction and thought 'You missed a very teachable moment of being able to explain to your daughter about disability and how it can be normalised as she is curious.' A lot of us lose curiosity because we're taught not to ask questions and pretend we know it all. As the Paralympics are televised and people see, they are able to ask more questions and not just determine outcasts or different. They can see, accept and understand.

**AS: Are there any practical tips to people listening who might be marvelling at you? how do you make it work to be a mum, an athlete, a business owner and a pastor. How do you go through all that without going crazy?**

**KM:** Well I think I go crazy sometimes but something I've really practiced is being where I am while I'm there. If I'm in the parenting role with Duke, my goal is to be there with Duke. When I'm working, I'll think of business or cookies, I'm choosing to be there. If I'm at practice I'm not there wondering about the business or what Duke's doing, but I'm doing my best to be at practice. That's really my way. There are so many different ways to schedule but I think the real core of all of it is being present where you are while you're there. You get 24 hours in your day and if you spend 12 of them worrying, you're not there for the present of it. So focusing on what I'm doing while I'm there and trying to keep track on the schedule.

**AS: I love that. Being where I am while I'm there, that's superb and I'm going to try and use it myself. I've got one question and the question starts by saying 'You are only 24'. I had to scroll back up to the top of my document to check your name and age again because listening to you, you sound so wise and I had to double check you were only 24. You're a two-time Paralympic medallist, and I know there is Paris in a few years' time. But you must already be thinking about 2028.**

**KM:** Yeah, I am. I think the biggest thing is wondering. I feel like well in my 40s, but sometimes I have to remember I'm only 24 and there's so much I can still do. My husband and I talk a lot about how long I want to be in the Games for and I'm really not sure, but I think that's okay. I would love to be in LA because it's on home turf, I would get to be here and show everyone in the US what the Paralympics are, what sitting volleyball is. I would love to be in LA.

**It's been a real pleasure speaking to you Kaleo and I will send you my address to send me some cookies because it's teatime here as I'm recording this, so I'm feeling a bit peckish and I want some sugar now. Which is not going to help my own athletic ability. It's been great having you.**

**KM:** It's been great, thank you for having me.